

Mathematics at The Ohio State University
1873 to 1969

Mathematics and Engineering was one of the original departments of the Ohio State University. Professor Robert W. McFarland was appointed the first chairman in 1873, the year when the university was opened to students. In October of 1878 he was also appointed Bursar and in April 1880 was also appointed Superintendent of Campus. Mathematics and Engineering were made separate departments in 1885. In May, 1885 Professor McFarland resigned to become President of Miami University.

Professor McFarland was succeeded as chairman by Professor George C. Comstock of Washburne Observatory in Madison, Wisconsin. Professor Comstock resigned in 1887 to return to Washburne Observatory as director. He was succeeded as chairman by Professor Rosser D. Bohannon, late of the University of Virginia. The department at this time consisted of five members. Professor Bohannon served as chairman of the department for forty years until his death in 1926. In the twenties the department consisted of around thirteen members.

Professor Bohannon was succeeded as chairman in 1926 by Professor Harry W. Kuhn. Professor Kuhn had been a member of the department since 1901 and was a charter member of the American Mathematical Society. In 1929 the department of Mathematics (along with Chemistry and Physics) was transferred to the College of Arts and Sciences. Professor Kuhn served as chairman until his retirement in 1943.

In 1943 Professor Kuhn was succeeded as chairman by John L. Synge who came here from the University of Toronto where he had served as chairman of the Department of Mathematics for thirteen years.

In 1946 Professor Synge resigned and was succeeded by Professor Tiber Rado. Professor Rado had been in the department since 1930 having come from Hungary after spending the previous year as a lecturer at Harvard University and Rice Institute. Professor Rado resigned as chairman in January, 1949, when he was appointed the first University Research Professor. He held this position until his retirement in 1965. The department averaged around twenty-two members during the forties.

Professor Paul V. Reichelderfer was acting chairman for six months of 1949 and Professor Robert G. Helsel was acting chairman for six months of 1949 and nine months of 1950. In the fall of 1950 Professor Helsel was appointed chairman of the department. Except for a few years during World War II, Professor Helsel had been in the department as a student and teacher since 1939. He retired as chairman in 1962. Professor D. Ransom Whitney served as acting chairman of the department from the summer quarter of 1962 until the autumn quarter of 1963. In 1962 the department moved from University Hall to the Mathematics Building at 231 West Eighteenth Avenue.

In 1963 Professor Arnold E. Ross became the present chairman of the department. He came from the University of Notre Dame where he had served as chairman of the department of Mathematics since 1946. At the present time the department consists of seventy-seven permanent full time members.